

From: [ML](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Planning commission - 91512
Date: Monday, March 16, 2026 12:32:10 PM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[image.png](#)
[image.png](#)

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Once demolition is approved, the consequences to this community cannot be undone.

Madison needs housing. But good planning should never place years of demolition and construction so closely to a preschool and its playground. Development can happen here — but it must be designed so it does not harm the youngest members of our community.

A six-story, 200-unit building with a multi-year construction timeline located roughly 50 feet from the preschool playground and surrounding it by two sides **raises serious compatibility concerns.** This is a **sensitive land use that requires additional protection** in planning decisions.

This preschool has a 60+ year legacy and has invested in this location for over 30+ years. It is the only American Montessori Society–verified school in the Madison area, and one of only 3 in Wisconsin. See picture 1 below representing this special community school.

I do *not* see how the commission can make the required finding that this proposal will not negatively affect the use, enjoyment, or value of the adjacent property — in this case, a preschool serving children ages two to six. **There is clear incompatible adjacent use involving a sensitive population,** including:

- Proximity of demolition and construction to the playground
- Incompatibility of childcare with ongoing construction activity
- A 200-unit residential building surrounding a non-affiliated school
- Balconies overlooking children’s outdoor play areas
- Noise and air quality impacts during and after construction

After thoughtful consideration, I propose that the developers **volunteer to withdraw** the project after community feedback or that it be **rejected outright by the planning commission** after community feedback.

At minimum, I urge the commission for a **referral** of this proposal back to staff and the

developer to redesign the project so it is compatible with the preschool use on the site.

Criteria for redesign:

- Redesign maintaining the original footprint of the buildings, including adjustments to height and scale. Limit of a maximum 5 stories, not to exceed the height of the neighboring apartment complex Urbana. Increased setbacks starting at the 3rd floor. See picture 2.
- For Building A on Medical Circle, a design that revitalizes the Marshall Erdman building and respects the character of Medical Circle. Also consider re-use of building including consultation with historical society, and architects and developers familiar with mid century buildings and Marshall Erdman. **The history of Madison matters.** See picture 3 below.
- A realistic construction timeline with clear start date, duration, and workable construction hours aligned with preschool operations. **July or August 2026 is not a realistic option with a neighboring preschool.**
- A demolition dust mitigation plan
- Construction hour limits to minimize disruption
- Air quality monitoring throughout construction
- Playground protection barriers and other safety mitigation measures

Once demolition is approved, the consequences to this community cannot be undone.

Please give this school — and these children — the time and protection they deserve.

Picture 1:



Picture 2:

Red box is from the developer on the original proposal. Redesign plan should keep Building A on original footprint and Building B on original footprint. MCH is circled in green.



Picture 3: Picture of a proposed development rendering shared by another MCH family member that mirrors the likeness of Medical Circle buildings and famed architect Marshall Erdman



From: [Margaret Porco](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: File 91512 Planned Development — 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle
Date: Monday, March 16, 2026 12:32:01 PM

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March 2026

City of Madison Plan Commission

Re: Application for Planned Development — 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle

Dear Members of the Plan Commission,

My name is Margaret Porco. I am writing as President of the Board of Directors of Montessori Children's House (MCH) at 5530 Medical Circle — but I am also a former student. The teachers who shaped my earliest years are the same teachers my own children have learned from. That continuity across generations is rare, irreplaceable, and exactly what is at stake today.

MCH has served Madison's children for over 60 years. We are not opposed to development, and we support affordable housing. We are asking this Commission to ensure that new development does not substantially impair the uses and values of existing neighbors — and to require that the costs of mitigating this project's impacts do not fall on our nonprofit school.

MCH - Background

MCH is a licensed early childhood education facility serving children ages 18 months to 6 years. We are a long-standing nonprofit and a local small business — precisely the type of community asset protected under both the City's Comprehensive Plan and the West Side Area Plan. Our building on Medical Circle is a well-maintained Marshall Erdman structure that is part of a cohesive commercial park designed as an ensemble. We are an established use in an area the West Side Plan designates for Employment/Commercial purposes.

The Required Approval Standards Are Not Met

The Plan Commission “shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and any applicable neighborhood, neighborhood development, or special area plan.” The Commission cannot approve this project simply because it meets minimum dimensional standards — it must affirmatively find that all approval standards are satisfied. We believe the following are not met:

Standard 1: The use will not be detrimental to public health, safety, or general welfare

The proposed development includes a two-story underground parking garage being

constructed within feet of an active playground used daily by children ages 18 months to 6 years. Construction at this proximity will:

- Prevent safe outdoor time during construction — a licensing obligation for MCH and a developmental necessity for this age group.
- Expose children to construction noise at levels research has shown to significantly increase cognitive load in young learners.
- Create dust and air quality concerns directly over areas where children play and rest.
- Compromise nap time environments through vibration and ongoing noise.

When we asked the developer whether they would install noise barriers during construction, they declined, stating there is “not much we can do about noise — construction is construction.” This is not an acceptable answer when an active licensed school for infants and toddlers sits directly adjacent.

Standard 3: The uses and values of other property in the neighborhood will not be substantially impaired

Building A (Odana Road), as proposed, sits significantly closer to the shared lot line than any existing adjacent building. It will place 227 residential units — with windows and balconies — in direct sight lines over our playground where children as young as 18 months play under supervision. This creates specific, foreseeable harms:

- Unknown adults in residential units and on balconies will have an unobstructed elevated view of young children at play — a direct conflict with our licensing obligations, our security protocols, and the reasonable expectations of our families.
- Our ability to maintain a secure, supervised outdoor environment will be compromised both during and after construction.
- Enrollment may decline as families choose centers that can guarantee a secure, private outdoor environment — directly impairing the financial viability of our established nonprofit.
- Increased vehicle traffic routed around our building during drop-off and pick-up hours will worsen an already accident-prone intersection at Whitney Way and Odana Road, as identified in the West Side Area Plan.

We have reviewed the staff report’s comparisons to Red Caboose, Lapham, Hawthorne, and the Valor/Tenney situation. Each comparison is materially different from the facts here: Red Caboose is an intentionally co-located use; Lapham and Hawthorne serve older children and are not licensed infant/toddler facilities with specific state-mandated outdoor supervision requirements; and the Valor/Tenney building is smaller in scale, does not include two stories of underground parking at this proximity, and had conditions placed on it based on neighborhood concerns. The combination of topography, building mass, proximity, and the vulnerable age of our

children makes this situation categorically distinct.

Standard 11: Height in excess of district limits — impact on surrounding properties

The Commission is required to consider “the impact on surrounding properties, including height, mass, orientation, shadows and view” when evaluating excess height requests. Shadow studies submitted by the developer show significant shadowing of our playground and classrooms across multiple seasons and school-day hours. Natural light is not optional in early childhood education — it directly affects children’s health, circadian rhythms, mood, and development, and it is central to our Montessori program’s operation. The submitted shadow studies confirm the impact; they do not mitigate it.

Zoning and Land Use Context

Medical Circle is designated Employment/Commercial in the West Side Area Plan, specifically to preserve space for employers of varied sizes to operate. The West Side Plan explicitly identifies this area as one not recommended for residential development due to proximity to the Beltline. MCH is a long-term nonprofit that has operated on Medical Circle for decades — exactly the use the plan designates this land to support.

The West Side Plan also recognizes schools as cultural assets deserving protection: “The cultural assets of the Area significantly contribute to neighborhoods – these assets can come in the form of religious institutions, neighborhood institutions, schools, businesses, and other gathering places.” (West Side Area Plan, p. 40).

Madison General Ordinance §28.098 mandates that Planned Developments be compatible with surrounding land uses. The City’s Comprehensive Plan, Strategy 4, explicitly states the need to “support children with enriching child care during the critical developmental years between birth and 5 years of age” (p. 68). This development, as currently designed, threatens rather than supports that goal.

Developer Engagement Has Not Resulted in Meaningful Accommodation

MCH has participated in good faith in multiple meetings with the developer. We raised our concerns clearly, specifically, and repeatedly. The sole confirmed change to the project is the relocation of a dog run — which, given our proximity and the age of our students, introduces its own liability concerns. On every substantive issue — setback of Building A, noise mitigation during construction, HVAC orientation, privacy screening, and financial impacts on our school — the developer has offered no commitments and no willingness to negotiate design modifications beyond what is minimally required.

The burden of mitigating this development’s impacts must not fall on MCH. We are a nonprofit school. We did not choose to be surrounded by a 227-unit development. The developer is seeking significant public approvals and density bonuses; it is the developer’s responsibility to design a project that does not impose uncompensated costs on its established neighbors.

Requested Commission Actions

We ask the Commission to either deny approval of this application until the design is substantially revised, or to impose the following conditions as prerequisites to any approval:

- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->**Require Building A to be set back further from the shared property line**, sufficient to limit direct sight lines from residential windows and balconies into the MCH playground. The setback should match or exceed that of the existing adjacent apartment building.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Require Building A balconies on elevations that cannot be screened and are facing the MCH playground to be reoriented or eliminated.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Require a detailed Construction Management Plan that includes: Restriction of pile driving, heavy excavation, and other high-impact activities to hours outside of MCH's core operating hours (typically 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday); A designated construction vehicle haul route that minimizes large and diesel equipment idling and traffic adjacent to the MCH property; A contact person and response protocol for MCH to report violations or concerns in real time, installation of noise and dust barriers along the shared boundary; and continuous safe access for children ages 18 months to 6 years throughout the 18+ month construction period.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Require that HVAC systems for both buildings not be vented toward MCH or its playground.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Require that the developer prohibit smoking within a meaningful buffer of the MCH property line.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Require the developer to fund or otherwise compensate MCH for any physical modifications to its facility necessitated by this development (e.g., additional fencing, screening, privacy measures).
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Require MCH to have the opportunity to review any revised plans and respond before final Commission action.

Montessori Children's House has served this community for over six decades and intends to serve it for decades more. The children in our care — some as young as 18 months — cannot advocate for themselves before this Commission. We are asking you to do so on their behalf by requiring that this development be designed with genuine care for its youngest and most vulnerable neighbors, and that its costs not be silently transferred to the nonprofit institution that has cared for Madison's children since before this developer existed.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Porco

Board President, Montessori Children's House

5530 Medical Circle, Madison, WI

From: [Leo Kucek](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: #91512 Proposed 5534 Medical Circle & 5555 Odana Road Project
Date: Monday, March 16, 2026 11:23:28 AM

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Dear Commissioners:

Through decades of dedication, Montessori Children's House has built and fostered an excellent school for some of Madison's youngest learners. As our kids grow up, cultivating plants in the west-facing windows of their classrooms, and building their own towers, the kids - including mine - know that any growth requires stability at its foundation. The foundation for this excellent school is its peaceful environment, due in part to its amazing leadership and teachers, and in part to its intentional, curated setting.

The proposed development's towering windows and balconies, along with the proximity of the new buildings, are incompatible with the current private, peaceful outdoor environment and playground. Risk mitigation for other items, such as the impact to westbound afternoon traffic on Odana and Medical Circle, along with protections for the children during construction, have not yet been sufficiently presented. To preserve Montessori Children's House's peaceful and curated setting, and to protect our youngest learners' ability to learn in the privacy they have grown to love, I ask the Commission to:

1. Increase the setbacks and require adherence to the existing apartment complex standard;
2. Require modifications to minimize sightlines, especially to the playground; and
3. Reject proposals with any balconies facing the playground.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leo Kucek

--

Leo A. Kucek
(262) 506-4337 (mobile)



Mitchell R. Olson
molson@axley.com
608.283.6724

VIA: E-mail Only

March 16, 2026

City of Madison Plan Commission
Madison Municipal Building
215 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Room 206
Madison, WI 53703
pccomments@cityofmadison.com

RE: Madison Planning Commission Meeting of March 16, 2026; Agenda Items 10-12
Legistar File ID #91459, 91512,91514

Dear Plan Commission Members:

I am retained by the Montessori Children's House ("MCH") with respect to a pending development proposal by Bear Development, LLC, at 5534 Medical Circle and 5555 Odana Road.

My client is opposed to the application for a Conditional Use Permit in the CC-T zone. The application seeks approval for two (2) mixed-use buildings with more than 60 units, and for one of the buildings to exceed five stories.

MCH has served local families for over 60 years in the field of early-childhood education. MCH is an accredited center under license with the City of Madison. MCH's location is ideally suited to serve the surrounding community in the vicinity of Whitney Way / Odana Road, where many employment opportunities and housing options exist for young families. The long-standing smaller scale development in this area south of Odana Road is well-suited for professional and medical offices, for example. The proposed CUP goes against many of these historical patterns and values.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

MGO sec. 28.183 governs conditional use permitting. Of particular import:

- The Purpose of the CUP section “requires consideration, in each case, **of their impact on neighboring land or public facilities, and for the public need for the particular use at a particular location.**” 28.183(1)
- The Code sets forth Approval Standards: “The City Plan Commission shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and any applicable, neighborhood, neighborhood development, or special area plan.... **No application for a conditional use shall be granted by the Plan commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:**” MGO sec. 28.183(6)
 - “The establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare.” Approval Standard # (Standard 1)
 - “The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner.” Approval Standard # (Standard 3)

The City of Madison is likewise subject to 2017 Wisconsin Act 67 as adopted at Wis. Stat. sec. 62.23(7)(de). Among the key provisions therein:

- “The applicant must demonstrate that that the application and all requirements and conditions established by the city relating to the conditional use are or shall be satisfied, both of which must be supported by substantial evidence.” Wis. Stat. sec. 62.23(7) (de)2.b.
- “The city’s decision to approve or deny the permit must be supported by substantial evidence.” Wis. Stat. sec. 62.23(7) (de)2.b.
- “‘Substantial evidence’ means facts and information other than merely personal preferences or speculation, directly pertaining to the requirements and conditions an applicant must meet to obtain a conditional use permit and that reasonable persons would accept in support of a conclusion.” Wis. Stat. sec. 62.23(7) (de)1.b

The Area Land Use Plan approved by the City of Madison is also relevant. The City of Madison Plan for the West Area, adopted September 10, 2024, covers the subject properties. Of note from that Plan:

- The subject area is in the “Employment and Commercial Focus” – not residential nor mixed use. Page 12.
- Much of the subject area (southern portion) is designated “Employment” as future land use – not any residential category nor mixed use. Page 13.
- Public Comments focused on “more mixed-use development and high density at appropriate locations.” “Avoid over-developing and losing neighborhood character.” Page 15.

ANALYSIS OPPOSING CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

The Application, as presented, should not be approved. Revisions to the application are required, based on the following analysis, before the City can lawfully approve a project of this nature at this location.

First, the applicant has submitted no substantial evidence with its Application to show that it can or will meet all requisite conditions. It is a bare bones application that makes no effort to address MGO sec. 28.183.

Second, CUP standard # 1 (“The establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare.”) cannot be met as proposed.

There is particular concern as to the “establishment” component here. This covers the **construction** of the facilities. We cannot wave a magic wand and have these two massive structures in place. There is a nearly 2-year construction process. There will be long-term demolition, excavation, and construction. All of which is proposed to take place within 100 feet – and likely less – to an outdoor playground for young children who must recreate for at least 3 hours per day. Consider noise, dust, and safety risks from any workplace accidents,

The application totally ignores this situation and the risks of health and safety inherent therein. There is no construction plan to address these concerns. There is no safety plan proposed. There are no legitimate fencing and landscaping proposed.

The City should seriously consider directing the developer to move the southern extent of “Building A” further north and away from the MCH lot line/playground.

There is a clear and obvious risk to the health, safety, and welfare of the neighboring occupants, which must be addressed.



Third, CUP standard #3 (“The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner.”) cannot be met as proposed.

The existing uses, such the childcare center here, have not been considered by the Application. In fact, the Application appears to have deliberately ignored the MCH property and its activities. MCH is an already established use. This proposal will substantially impair or diminish in a foreseeable manner the use and enjoyment of the MCH property. The scope of public comment offered, and to be offered, shows this standard cannot be met by Applicant.

MCH’s position is that it cannot remain safely open and operational with the construction impacts required for this proposal.

MCH also has significant safety concerns as to residential units perched directly above and looking down, from 100 feet distance, at a playground. A further setback would ameliorate these concerns, to some degree.

Fourth, the applicable land use plan does not call for multi-family high rise development. It calls for employment and commercial land uses. There are many suitable locations for this sort of development, including along the south side of Odana Road. But not all the way south to Medical Circle, as proposed. One cannot, in good faith, interpret this West Area land use plan to deem this application consistent with that plan.

In conclusion, the size, scale, type of use, and location of use are all non-compliant with the City’s code and plan. The Application does not contain the requisite substantial evidence to obtain a conditional use permit. This application should be denied or sent back to the developer to address these concerns and present a suitable proposal for this site.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

AXLEY LLP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MRO' followed by a horizontal flourish.

Mitchell R. Olson
MRO:ea

From: [Ken Heim](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Cc: [Highlights](#); [Montessori Childrens House](#)
Subject: 5534 Medical Circle & 5555 Odana Road
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 2:55:35 PM

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TO: City of Madison Plan Commission

FROM: Ken and Marcy Heim
2679 Fahey Glen
Fitchburg, WI 53711

RE: 5534 Medical Circle and 5555 Odana Road

DATE: March 15, 2026

We are submitting these comments in opposition to the proposed multi-family/commercial development. We are alumni parents. Our two sons attended Montessori Children's House and had wonderful, life-changing experiences there. They were introduced to a diverse student population of different races, origins and traditions. The boys got an excellent start to their education with the unique Montessori teaching methods that allowed them to excel in math, science, Spanish and music. These are the reasons that so many diverse professionals and UW faculty seek out Montessori Children's House for their kids' beginning education.

Even though the school is located in a commercial district, it fit well with the offices surrounding it. The traffic to the health club didn't affect the operation of the school nor the safety of the children. The existing buildings fit together well and the situation worked.

As a commercial real estate broker of 30+ years, I have been involved in development projects that made sense for the neighborhood. This one doesn't.

The planned mixed-use development will have multiple negative impacts on Montessori Children's House. Packing 237 housing units in that space will overwhelm the neighborhood and will result in greatly increased traffic and noise, especially during construction. The fact that the apartments adjacent to the school will have balconies overlooking the playground is potentially unsettling. Unknown people living in those apartments could be threats to the privacy and safety of students and their families. Any building with a height greater than 3 stories is out of place in that area.

Also, I searched the internet for a site plan and couldn't find one online. How far is the apartment building from the Montessori property line? How much green space is the city requiring around the apartments?

Montessori Children's House has been a great resource for families for six decades. The school's proximity to the University of Wisconsin, the UW Research Park, Hilldale and West Towne makes it convenient for parents to drop off and pick up their children. Moving the schools unacceptable due to the damage it would cause the families that rely on it.

The plan as proposed is unacceptable. Reduce the building height to 3 stories and require a minimum 25 foot setback from the school property.

Our children are Madison's future. Giving them a sound start that is diverse, inclusive and effective is critical.

From: [Bryan Althouse](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Agenda item 11, file 91512
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 12:39:58 PM

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March 15, 2025

City of Madison Plan Commission
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Madison, WI 53703

Summary:

The proposed development includes a six story building directly behind Montessori Children's House (MCH) and an additional five story building on Medical Circle. As proposed, the project fails to satisfy several required approval standards under MGO § 28.183, including the obligation to ensure safety, protect neighboring property uses, and provide adequate site controls during construction.

MCH is a nonprofit institution that has served Madison for nearly 60 years. The scale and proximity of this development create predictable impacts—noise, air quality, vibration, soil displacement, traffic disruption, and potential safety concerns (to name a few)—that have not been adequately addressed. The developer has applied for TIF funding, WHEDA tax credits, and City financial support, making Madison taxpayers direct financial stakeholders whose concerns must meaningfully factor into the approval process.

I am asking for conditional requirements that reflect the City's legal obligations and prevent the burdens of this development from being shifted onto a community institution that neither caused nor can absorb them. Reasonable conditions are necessary to ensure responsible development and to maintain public confidence in the process. These include: design modifications to ensure more adequate spatial buffer between incompatible uses; a formal construction management plan to protect the interests of the school; structural and air quality monitoring; traffic safety protections; clarity on process that ensure child and staff safety once the units are rented/during tenant selection, and proactive engagement with the school. These conditions should be met PRIOR to any permits being granted or the project commencing.

Full Letter:

I am writing as a parent of one child who currently attends Montessori Children's House (MCH) and two children who are alumni. I am also writing as someone who supports the expansion of affordable housing development in our city. I want to be clear from the outset that I understand Madison needs more housing supply and I am not here to obstruct that goal.

Rather, I am here because the manner in which this particular development is proceeding raises serious concerns -concerns that fall squarely within your legal obligations under Madison General Ordinance § 28.183. A vote to approve this project without conditions addressing those concerns would not simply be a missed opportunity. It would be a failure to meet the approval standards your own code requires.

The Commission's Own Standards Require Serious Consideration Of The Issues Raised By The School And The Community.

Under MGO § 28.183(6), no conditional use may be approved unless the Commission affirmatively finds, among other things, that:

- The use "will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare" (28.183(6)(a))

(1));

- “The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner” (28.183(6)(a)(3)); and
- “Adequate... access roads... internal circulation improvements for pedestrians... and other necessary site improvements have been or are being provided” (28.183(6)(a)(5)).

These are not aspirational guidelines. They are the legal conditions for approval. And the record before you does not yet demonstrate that they have been met with respect to Montessori Children’s House.

The construction of a six-story building within 70 feet of the school’s playground and a five story building directly adjacent to the school raises direct and foreseeable questions about privacy/security/safety, noise, air quality, structural vibration, soil displacement, traffic flow alterations that impact safe student drop-off and pick-up. These are not speculative concerns — they are the predictable consequences of large-scale construction in close proximity to a licensed early childhood facility serving young children.

I have very little faith based on what I have observed and heard that this developer will do anymore than the absolute minimum that is required of them, and certainly not consider the schools needs within that. That is a gap the Commission has the authority — and the obligation — to close before any vote for approval.

A Community Institution That Cannot, and Should Not, Absorb These Costs Alone

Montessori Children’s House has served this community for nearly 60 years. It is a nonprofit institution, not a business with deep capital reserves, and it operates with the margins inherent to high-quality early childhood education. The staff turnover rate is exceptionally low — many teachers have dedicated decades to the school — which is itself a measure of the institutional quality that takes generations to build. However, without support it can take very little time to lose.

If families leave during a disruptive construction period, that revenue does not come back immediately. If the building is structurally affected by soil displacement from excavation of a development 70 feet away, the school bears those repair costs. If safe drop-off becomes untenable and the school must modify operations, that is an operational burden the school and the community they serve did not create and should not be required to carry alone.

Approving this project without conditions – design modifications to increase spatial buffering, a clear plan for ensuring safety and security of students and staff during construction as well as through rental management, construction timeline transparency, a mitigation fund, structural monitoring, traffic management during school hours, fencing and access controls at the playground — is not neutral. It is a decision to transfer the costs of this development onto a nonprofit school and the community they serve rather than to the developer who stands to gain financially from this project.

TaxpayerSubsidized Projects Carry Heightened Public Obligations

The developer is seeking TIF funding, WHEDA tax credits, and City financial support. When public funding subsidizes private development, the public becomes an involuntary stakeholder in the outcome. That reality strengthens the Commission’s obligation to ensure:

- Public health and safety are protected;
- Burdens are not shifted onto schools or nonprofits; and
- Community institutions are not collateral damage in subsidized private projects.

Reasonable conditions are not only consistent with the City’s fiduciary responsibility; they are required to preserve public confidence in how taxpayer resources are used.

The Process So Far Has Failed to Meet the City’s Own Standard of Community Engagement

I want to speak plainly about something that extends beyond this project. A growing number of Madison residents — your constituents — no longer believe their concerns carry weight. This perspective comes from attending many public format proceedings (Common Council, Planning Commission, etc) myself as well as talking with other residents who have attended, where, despite consistent concerns being raised during the proceedings, public officials barely even pause to acknowledge the concerns that are shared before moving on to push a project through. This belief is summed up perfectly when I asked another MCH parent about whether they planned on submitting a comment to this proceeding. Her response was: “Good luck. The city doesn’t care about our input anymore.” They did not submit their concerns, and they are not in attendance tonight. Unfortunately, they are not an isolated case.

I have read the staff report for this project. I will say respectfully that it reads less like a neutral evaluation of whether the required approval standards have been met and more like a brief in favor of approval. That may not be the intent, but it is the impression it creates. When a staff report is used to justify moving a project through rather than to test whether the legal conditions for approval have been satisfied, it undermines confidence in the process — and, by extension, in the Commission itself.

The school’s leadership has repeatedly sought a seat at the table in this process — in developer meetings, in drawings, in basic informational exchanges about timelines and plans. They have been largely shut out. They have hired legal counsel at significant cost simply to be heard. They are now asking parents to advocate on their behalf because direct engagement with the developer and city has produced minimal results so far.

This is not the standard Madison has historically held itself to. And it is not the standard your own code holds you to.

What I Am Asking For

I am asking for conditional requirements that reflect your legal obligations, a thoughtful development plan, and the long-standing values of this city. Specifically:

1. Design modifications that create meaningful setback for both buildings, but especially the proposed building within 70 feet of the school playground, consistent with the Commission’s obligation under 28.183(6)(a)(11) to consider “the impact on surrounding properties, including height, mass, orientation, shadows and view.”
2. A formal construction management plan that addresses impacts on MCH, including (but not limited to) noise mitigation, dust and air quality controls, vibration and structural monitoring of the school building, and traffic and drop-off safety during school hours.
3. Developer-funded construction mitigation support for MCH, including relocation assistance should it become necessary, and security fencing with controlled access at the school playground perimeter.
4. A transparent construction timeline provided to the school with adequate advance notice of major phases that includes advanced warning of disruption to utilities so that MCH can inform families, manage enrollment, and plan operations accordingly.
5. A transparent framework for the tenant selection plan that outlines how the management company will ensure that they are not admitting residents who may have criminal histories that would/could pose a threat to the safety of the children or staff of the nearby school...especially in consideration of the visibility from the units directly into the playground and school areas.

These are not extraordinary requests. They are the basic conditions of thoughtful development — the kind Madison is capable of when it chooses to be.

Quality early childhood education is not a luxury amenity. It is infrastructure. MCH has served this city for nearly six decades, and it serves families who depend on it every single day. Affordable housing is also critical infrastructure. There is no reason, with thoughtful conditions and genuine engagement, that both cannot succeed here.

I hope your vote demonstrates that Madison still believes the voices of residents who show up and engage with local governance still matter. If on the other hand you choose to vote on this project without conditions, I hope you

do so with such conviction that every time a child cannot sleep during the state mandated rest time, that you would feel comfortable looking them in the eyes and reassuring them that it was more important to avoid developer inconvenience than make sure that you would be so sure of your decision that every time a child with respiratory children can rest, that every time a child with respiratory sensitivities like asthma is having a hard time breathing on the playground or in the classroom due to dust and particulate pollution from the construction process, that you would let them know it is ok because it wasn't fair to ask the development company to make sure that their project didn't make it harder for children to breathe. If you are not prepared to defend your position in such a way to the community stakeholders whom this project directly effects, then I imagine there is no way you could vote in favor of this project without appropriate and reasonable modifications to the current proposal.

Respectfully,

Bryan James Althouse
Parent, Montessori Children's House

Dear, builders

Please don't build next to mch! It is like a home away from home it means a lot to me. And I do not want people to suffer because you are building here 😡.

It can affect how people learn at mch. If you want to build go some where else 😡. It does not make sense! Do you want to affect people's learning? You are not being kind at all. ❤️

Please do not do it. When I went to mch it was the best thing ever and I want people to enjoy it as much as I did when I was there.

From:

Aurora

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Montessori Children's House (MCH) is a non-profit, parent board run, Montessori preschool that provides whole child learning for children from 18 months to 6 years of age (elementary alumni program offered in the summer).

We invite the Planning Commission to visit our school! In the meantime, attached are some pictures of the school representing the outdoor environment and light-filled classrooms. For the privacy of our students, no faces of our students are included here.

Background: MCH is Madison's longest-running Montessori preschool, founded in 1964 through a community effort to bring this unique educational approach to our city. **Community** continues to be one of the concepts that our parent-led Board of Directors values most. We respect the trust that parents place in our school when they leave their children with us and we believe we can best serve that trust by creating a nurturing and collaborative **community** for our students, parents and staff.

At MCH, our educational philosophy is rooted in the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori. She found that children possess a great love of learning and an eagerness to explore their environment. By working with a child's inclination toward discovery, a learning environment is created which fosters independence, self-discipline and motivation. Freedom and security in the classroom ensures that children develop a love for learning and progress at their own pace.

- Classrooms are inviting and are carefully prepared to meet the developmentally progressive needs of toddlers through preschool students.
- Activities are readily accessible so children can make their own choices. Experiencing success with their selections provides a powerful foundation for self esteem.
- Children are free to work without interruption until they feel a sense of completion, which enhances concentration and encourages further inquiry.
- Sequential, multi-sensory materials lead from concrete to abstract learning in math, language, geography, science, art, music and world cultures.
- Practical life skills such as conflict resolution and respectful interactions with others are as valued as academic readiness.

Thank you!

Jim Lottridge, Laura Kvalheim, Margaret Porco (MCH Board President), MCH Staff & Families

--

Montessori Children's House

Madison, Wisconsin

Serving children since 1964!

Follow us on [Facebook!](#)

608.273.8600

608.441.9686 (fax)

MadisonMontessori.org





View from the parking lot of the proposed demolition site (5534 Medical Circle) towards the school (5530 Medical Circle)





















STATE of WISCONSIN



OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

Proclamation

WHEREAS, based on her observations of children and the manner by which they learn, Dr. Maria Montessori developed an innovative philosophy of education in the early 1900s that continues to influence learning across Wisconsin and the world; and

WHEREAS, a system for education for children from birth through the age of 18, the Montessori program uses Maria Montessori's own methods, materials, techniques, and observations to support students' natural development, encourage their learning, creativity, collaboration, independence, self-confidence, and advance the principles of peace through responsible citizenship as well as fair and equal treatment within society; and

WHEREAS, the Montessori Method includes developmental teaching, small group lessons, and the promotion of respect among children and peace to humankind;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tony Evers, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, do hereby proclaim February 24 – March 2, 2019 as

MONTESSORI EDUCATION WEEK

throughout the State of Wisconsin and I commend this observance to all of our citizens.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Madison this 15th day of February 2019.

Tony Evers
TONY EVERS
GOVERNOR

By the Governor:

Douglas La Follette
DOUGLAS LA FOLLETTE
Secretary of State



From: [Emily Foster Hill](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Cc: [Emily Foster Hill](#)
Subject: Comments for the Plan Commission: Reference #91512 (5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle)
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 5:40:26 PM

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To Whom It Should Concern (and in reference to #91512, 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle),

My name is Emily Foster Hill, and I am currently an Early Childhood Special Education Teacher with MMSD. I have been a part of the Montessori Children's House Community for the past 38 years. As a preschooler, I attended Montessori Children's House. As a young adult, I served as an Assistant Teacher prior to pursuing my Early Childhood Montessori Credential. Ten years later, I returned to Montessori Children's House and served as a Preschool Teacher, and Substitute. Throughout these experiences, I have had the privilege to work alongside my preschool teacher, and other dedicated staff members at Montessori Children's House who together have served over 200 years in building this most nurturing, professional community. Montessori Children's House is Madison's longest running Montessori school, and has now surpassed its 60th Anniversary

As an educator of 20+ years, it is apparent that Montessori Children's House holds exemplary standards of safety on behalf of their students, families, and staff. And as an educator, in every environment where I have served, it is well known that we strive to uphold the following for every child, family, and colleague: **our personal safety, the safety of one another, and the safety of our learning environments.**

I am extremely concerned regarding the long term safety hazards imposed upon the Montessori Children's House community, as a direct result of the proposed developments at 5555 Odana Road and 5534 Medical Circle.

The children in our care deserve the same consideration and support as those who need us to develop more affordable housing.

During the March 4th meeting, requirements to provide a shadow study, increased buffers (tree islands) between the playground edge and Odana Rd building, section drawings to illustrate the topography changes, and a visual representation of the school in context of the proposed development were made required of the developer.

We are grateful for these agreed upon requirements. As they just scratch the surface - and in order to fully meet them - we must continue to examine the following seven concerns in detail, and continue to work together in order to meet all of these requirements:

1. Safety and Privacy on Our Playground — Standard 3

The view into Montessori Children's House's playground is not a minor concern.

A 6-story, 78-foot building will sit directly behind the playground. A 5-story building will face it from the other side. That means hundreds of residential windows — and balconies — with a direct view down into the space where the youngest children play every day. In other words, the playground sits about 1.5 stories *below* the development's parking lot. That means even a mature tree won't block the upper floors. It's the equivalent of an 8-story building looking over the play area.

We are asking the Plan Commission to require:

- Building A be moved back from the back lot line to provide the separation necessary for privacy and safety.
- Opaque or frosted windows on floors facing the school.
- No balconies on the sides facing our outdoor space.

2. Sunlight and Shadows — Standard 3

Montessori Children's House's classrooms and playground will lose natural light.

A 78-foot building directly behind the playground will cast a long shadow over the outdoor space — especially in fall, winter, and spring when the sun is low. Building B will shadow classrooms that face it for large parts of the school day.

The UDC has already asked the developer for a shade study. We want to make sure that study shows the shadow on Montessori Children's House's *property specifically*, at school hours, across the full school year — not just a few sample images.

Natural light matters for children's learning and wellbeing. Loss of it is a real harm.

3. Noise — During Construction and After — Standards 1, 3, and 5

Construction will disrupt Montessori Children's House for 18–24 months or more.

Two large buildings going up at the same time, right next door, means noise,

vibration, dust, diesel exhaust, and heavy trucks — during the school day, every day, for up to two years. There is no way to fully protect the children and families from that. We want to be honest with the Commission: this will affect Montessori Children's House's ability to operate.

Being outside is not optional for young children. Licensing requires outdoor time and quiet rest periods. Construction next door makes both harder.

We are asking for:

- Construction hours that protect the school day — no major work during outdoor or rest times on school days
- A construction management plan with dust, noise, and truck route controls
- A written record of Montessori Children's House's building's current condition before construction begins, so any damage caused by construction is documented and the developer is responsible

After construction, noise doesn't go away.

HVAC equipment, loading areas, and the activity of hundreds of residents at upper floors will add ongoing noise to Montessori Children's House's environment. We ask that acoustical screening be required on equipment facing Montessori Children's House's property.

4. Traffic and Parking — Standard 1

227 new apartments next to a school designed with a cut through route around Montessori Children's House's property will change traffic on our streets.

Odana Road, Medical Circle and Whitney Way intersections are already congested and accident prone areas, Adding that many residents increases vehicle traffic at exactly the times — morning drop-off and afternoon/evening pick-up.

Specific concerns:

- The development's internal driveway appears to route traffic in a loop around Montessori Children's House's playground, creating a cut-through from Odana Road to Medical Circle to Whitney Way that passes directly by the play area and parking lot

- Montessori Children's House has limited parking for our families and cannot have residents or commercial visitors from the development using our lot
- Drop-off and pick-up times cannot be made more dangerous or congested

We are asking for a traffic study specifically focused on school arrival and dismissal times, and confirmation that the development's access points do not create new conflicts with our school circulation.

5. Stormwater and Building Damage — Standard 5

Flooding is already a problem on this corridor.

The Odana area has a known flooding history. Replacing parking lots and commercial buildings with large residential buildings changes where water goes. We want Engineering's review to model drainage specifically at Montessori Children's House's property line — including the playground — and confirm that post-construction runoff onto our property will not increase.

We also want a pre-construction assessment of Montessori Children's House's building's condition, with a monitoring plan during construction, so that any damage to our foundation, utilities, or structure caused by excavation and construction next door is documented and the developer is accountable.

6. The Height of Building A Requires a Special Finding — Standards 3 and 8

The Plan Commission must specifically find that 78 feet is compatible with what's next door.

The Odana Road building requires special approval because it exceeds the five-story limit. To grant that, the Commission must find the height is *compatible with the character of the surrounding area and adjacent properties*. Montessori Children's House is the adjacent property — on two sides. The Commission cannot make that finding honestly without confronting what a 78-foot wall means for a school playground directly below it.

We also ask that Building A be shifted back to align more closely with the existing apartment building on Odana Road, providing real spatial separation between that building and our children.

7. Setbacks and Building Placement — Standard 6

The buffer between our school and this development matters.

Zoning requires the Commission to evaluate how buildings relate to adjacent properties. A meaningful setback isn't just a legal formality — it is the physical space that separates a residential building's windows and balconies from a licensed child care center's playground.

We ask the Commission to require that Building A be moved back, and that the landscaped buffers the UDC has already requested from the developer actually be specified, sized, and required to provide real screening — not just decorative plantings.

Sincerely,

--

Emily Foster Hill

From: [ML](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Concerned community members - 91512
Date: Monday, March 16, 2026 8:32:37 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[image.png](#)

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The safety of children should never be an afterthought.

Housing is needed in Madison — especially affordable housing. Hard stop.

But something is wrong when a development proposal moves forward at the expense of its community-driven neighbors.

Time and thoughtful consideration are needed here. This is a vulnerable population, and we need time to determine how to keep the children at Montessori Children's House — MCH — safe. These students are **two to six years old**. They cannot advocate for themselves. They cannot choose to leave the environment adults create for them. That responsibility belongs to all of us.

Right now, this process feels rushed. Before moving forward, I urge you to slow down and reconsider the plan with the safety and well-being of these children at the center of the discussion. The presence of MCH and the impact of this development was NOT included in the January discussion and proposal.

Many families have already raised concerns since January. In addition to anything sent to the Planning Committee, please note the more than **30 emails submitted to the Urban Design Committee** and the **70+ people who attended the recent Urban Design meeting**. The Urban Design Committee referred us to you — the Planning Commission — for help.

Families have spoken about demolition concerns, building size and height concerns, and concerns about losing the historical significance of Medical Circle and Marshall Erdman buildings. All of these issues matter, but today I want to focus on three areas:

1.) Appreciation and respect for the school

MCH is the **only American Montessori Society–verified member school in the Madison area**, one of only **3 in Wisconsin**.

Since the 1990s, Montessori Children's House has invested deeply in its sunlit Marshall Erdman building at Medical Circle, creating a thoughtful, carefully prepared learning environment built around authentic Montessori principles.

A true Montessori environment depends on a carefully prepared classroom and outdoor space. That environment takes time, planning, and expertise to build. A school like this cannot simply be relocated overnight (or in a month or in six months).

Childcare regulations also require regular outdoor time. MCH has a carefully designed playground that supports outdoor play for up to **three hours a day, year-round, weather permitting**. Outdoor learning and play are not optional parts of the program — they are essential. And also part of Wisconsin childcare laws.

2.) Safety concerns during demolition.

Every day I wrestle with questions about the proposed demolition and construction nearby.

- Is there asbestos or lead paint in the buildings that will be demolished?
- How will demolition dust travel, and where will it settle?
- Will it be safe for children to play in the sandbox or garden if construction debris is floating in the air?
- Will children be able to safely grow and eat food from the garden if demolition debris is floating in the air?
- Will masks be required?
- What noise exposure will the children experience?
- Will snacks and lunches need to be prohibited outdoors?
- Could construction dust trigger allergies or other health concerns?
- What research has been considered regarding demolition dust and long-term health risks? Including blood cancers.

These are not theoretical concerns.

The emotional toll on students, educators, parents, and school leadership must also be considered.

3.) Practical concerns about this massive development.

- Why is a **six-story, 200-unit building** being proposed in a way that surrounds this preschool? Urbana Apartments, next door, is 5 stories and 77 units and stayed on the original blueprint of the previous location.
- Why can't a proposal follow the original blueprint and scale of these buildings?

- Why is **Supreme Fitness**, a 50-year-old community business loved by its members, not included in the development? Isn't there a proposal that could include keeping this business as part of the new development?
- If demolition proceeds, has temporary relocation for the school been considered during construction? How much time does that take? What financial and emotional impact would that have on this nonprofit institution? Could the disruption cause families to withdraw their children? Would emergency fundraising or community outreach be required just to keep the school operating? How will this impact the children?

At minimum, I recommend:

- Revisiting the development plan with explicit consideration of the preschool's presence
- Conducting thorough health and environmental safety assessments
- Exploring alternatives that create greater distance between demolition and the school
- Allowing adequate time for thoughtful community input and problem solving

Conclusion:

The safety of children should never be an afterthought in a development process.

Before approving a project of this scale, especially one where demolition would begin in 4 months, I ask you to pause and ensure that the health, safety, and stability of these children have truly been considered.

Please see attached photos of the school.





From: [Diana W](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: File #91512: Public Comment regarding proposed development at 5555 Odana Rd & 5534 Medical Circle
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 2:38:07 PM

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Dear Plan Commissioners,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Family Committee at **Montessori Children's House (MCH)**. Our committee is dedicated to fostering a strong, interconnected community through events that bring our children and families together.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed development to the north and west of our school at 5530 Medical Circle. Our school's outdoor spaces—specifically the fenced playground and the front nature area—are the heart of our community. These spaces are used year-round, not just during school hours, but also during essential community-building events like our recent Pi Day celebration, our annual beginning-of-the-year potluck, and milestone events like our 60th-anniversary celebration.

We ask that you specifically consider the following impacts:

- **Loss of Sunlight and Thermal Comfort:** Our families utilize the playground well into the late afternoon and early evening. Restricting sunlight during these hours will significantly impact the enjoyment and physical comfort of these spaces. In a Wisconsin climate, those extra hours of sun are vital for keeping outdoor play viable for young children and parents alike.
- **Privacy and Supervision:** The playground is a "safe harbor" where children run free and parents socialize. The introduction of a large-scale development immediately adjacent to these play areas introduces a sense of being observed that can make parents feel cautious and change the fundamental nature of our "open play" environment.
- **Safety and Parking Staging:** Our community events already stretch our on-site parking to its limit, forcing many families to park on the street and cross the road with young children. Any increase in traffic or reduction in street-side staging areas caused by this new development creates a direct safety risk for our families during these high-volume pick-up and event times.

Montessori Children's House has a long legacy in this location. We love our playground and the year-round outdoor education it provides. We urge the Commission to carefully weigh the sun studies, noise, and air pollution data against the preservation of this vital community space.

Thank you for your time and for considering the well-being of the MCH families.

Sincerely,

The MCH Family Committee

From: [Christine Onaga](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Item 91512
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 4:46:51 PM

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Resident since 1984 of the Greentree neighborhood and like others from Greentree have enjoyed use of establishments in the Whitney Way/ Odana Rd area. More recently in past decade I belonged to Supreme Fitness club. The entrances and exits to parking lot at rear of building felt curious but functional. Is that circuit to be maintained? One turn was off Odana, another off Whitney Way through Seafood Center mall area. Sometimes lot was filled with summer pool patrons — congestion! Often parked at rear row of lot and could peer into playground of a nursery school as their property slopes downhill from Supreme. There used to be hedges?

I do have issues with the density of the proposed development and how it abuts many kid dense areas. Smaller as in less than 6 stories may not be profitable but that's my wish. Given the kid demographic in the area, nursery school, YMCA and pool — you might factor in an evacuation space for emergency, fire vehicles as well as planning for traffic flow backups.

When our kids were little we used the West YMCA for summer daycare and at that time I drove Medical Circle. It did not seem congested. We are now grandparents picking up at this nursery school and Medical Circle seems fine in terms of traffic. However, we are concerned about a tall building's nearness to playground. We also believe traffic flow on Medical Circle, Odana Rd, Whitney Way and the old Supreme access circuit needs to be evaluated with care.

MCH is very special to me and my sisters!
I am very sad I can't go to the summer school
and more. I think you should really think carefully
about this.

Oliver (allumni of MCH)

From: [Douglas Hill](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Cc: [Douglas Hill](#)
Subject: Plan Commission #91512
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 4:24:55 PM

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To Whom it Should Concern:

I hereby wish to register my opposition to plan #91512 to build two residential apartment complexes in destructively close proximity to the Madison Montessori Children's House.
(5555 Odana Rd. and 5534 Medical Circle)

The safety and privacy and environmental cleanliness of the area, as well as the resultant added congestion, noise and air pollution are hard to imagine as acceptable so near such a wonderfully successful preschool. As a family of educators in Madison for over 50 years (my wife and daughter both having been Montessori teachers), I know this school, in particular, to be a very special place for so many Madison families over so many years.

Even if they were to back off the proximity to the school and create privacy barriers, the congestion, added traffic, stormwater flooding, noise, and eventual claustrophobia from two large apartment buildings will have a huge, negative, and perhaps even dangerous affect on a most valuable Madison preschool community.

Please reconsider....
Douglas Hill

From: [Karen Hill](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#); [Karen Hill](#)
Subject: Plan Commission #91512
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 4:57:16 PM

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To Whom it should concern,

My oppositional comments and concerns for the March 16, 2026 Plan Commission Hearing (5555 Odana Road and 5534 Medical Circle) to consider are about the children's well being, the school's learning environment (inside and outside), and the whole community served by Madison's Montessori Children's House.

My family is part of that dear community, nearly 40 years now. Our daughter was a Madison MCH preschooler. (I was an accredited Montessori Directress in Hamden, Connecticut in the early 1970's)

The children need a very safe and private school/playground with plenty of sun and sky available during their whole school day, inside and outside.

Residential balconies should not face the school and playground. All glass windows facing MCH must be frosted.

The disruptive nature of a construction period of that length and proximity with noise and air quality concerns must be considered as likely detrimental to the physical and mental health of the children, staff, and their families.

Respectfully and tearfully submitted,
Karen Hill

From: [Lisa K](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Plan Commission March 16 comment
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 3:41:14 PM

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Hello,

I oppose agenda item 10 and 11 on the March 16 meeting.

My son attends Montessori Children's House. The Odana Rd building is a six story building that is proposed to be built too close to the school playground. The proximity combined with height creates fundamental safety and privacy problems that cannot be solved by simply moving balconies, making berms, or planting trees. Montessori Children's House has been the best childcare center and preschool/kindergarten in Madison for over 60 years. Please do not compromise the future of this community gem by allowing another boring apartment building to be built too close to this school.

- The building's height combined with its closeness means windows—not just balconies—will have direct sightlines into our playground where young children should play freely and safely. This is inappropriate and presents a liability and danger in its placement next to an early childhood setting.
- The existing neighboring apartment complex behind our school (on Odana Rd) is set back further from the playground. The proposed new building should match that existing setback standard.
- Direct visual access from residential units into our playground compromises the safe, protected environment families trust us to provide for children ages 18 months to 6 years.

Thank you for wisely planning the future of our city.

Lisa Kissing Kucek

From: [Molly Poirier](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Project Near Montessori Children's House
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 12:52:47 PM

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I am writing to you as a parent of a former MCH student. Our daughter attended MCH 29 years ago and it was the absolute best decision we made to have her attend. The environment helped her build independence, confidence, love of gardening as well as other outdoor adventures.

The location of MCH is a perfect area and has supported so many families. Please include MCH staff and admin to participate in the discussions and development of the new build being proposed to ensure that their top quality of care continues and allows for the continued enrichment for generations of our community's children.

Thank you,

Molly Poirier

From: [Diana W](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: File #91512: AMENDED OPPOSITION - Request for Parcel Decoupling, Scale Mitigation, and Mandatory Environmental Impact Studies
Date: Saturday, March 14, 2026 11:11:30 PM
Attachments: [Open sky view from MCH playground.png](#)
[Beltline and Development Surrounding MCH.png](#)

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Dear Plan Commissioners,

My name is Diana Weng. I am a parent and board member at Montessori Children's House (MCH), located at **5530 Medical Circle**. We chose this school for its **physical soul**: the wood paneling, the indoor plants, and the wall of windows in every classroom that lets our children feel connected to the world. Currently, the playground is a sanctuary where my daughter watches birds and butterflies across a vast, open sky—an experience I hope my second child will also have (see attached picture showing the view towards the proposed demolition and build of a 5-story building at 5534 Medical Circle).

I am writing to formally amend my previous comments. As proposed, this project fails to meet the standards for **Conditional Use (MGO 28.183)**. It represents a fundamental land-use incompatibility that threatens the environment and existence of a vital childcare center. I ask the Commission to **refer this item** until the following architectural changes and mandatory studies are completed:

1. Mandatory Environmental & Solar Studies

The developer's sun study is fundamentally flawed. Showing a shadow at 5:00 PM in the winter (when the sun has already set in Madison) is a selective use of data. Under the spirit of **MGO 16.23** (which prioritizes solar orientation), we require **Diurnal Solar Access** between 10 AM and 3 PM. A 6-story building to the **north and west** will prematurely terminate afternoon sunlight, leaving the play area damp and dark during the only hours children are active outside.

Staff comparisons to other schools next to multistory buildings are also a **false equivalency** because MCH is uniquely situated with the **Beltline (Hwy 12/18)** immediately to its south (see attached picture). For the other schools mentioned as precedence that "high-density residential and educational uses can coexist.", they have **arterial city streets** with stoplights, lower speeds, and lower heavy-truck volumes compared to the Beltline. The "comparable" schools cited by staff are largely in "open" or "grid-style" layouts where wind can disperse pollutants. MCH is being turned into a "dead-end" for noise and airflow.

Before moving forward, the developer must provide:

- **Diurnal Solar Access Study:** An hourly shadow analysis (10 AM, 12 PM, 2 PM) on the winter solstice to prove the playground will not become a damp, dark "cold pocket."

- **Acoustic Impact Report:** A formal report ensuring outdoor noise remains below the **WHO-recommended 55 dB**. This must specifically model how the new north and west massing will act as an "**Acoustic Mirror**," reflecting Beltline traffic noise back onto the playground.
- **CFD (Fluid Dynamics) Airflow Model:** Evidence that the "U-shaped" massing of 5555 Odana and 5534 Medical Circle will not trap PM 2.5 (particulate matter) from the Beltline, creating an air quality hazard for developing lungs.

2. 5534 Medical Circle: Parcel Decoupling & Architectural Continuity

The redevelopment of **5534 Medical Circle** (the west parcel) should not be an extension of the Odana Rd massing and the "through-road" should be eliminated .

- **The Demand:** This must remain a **separate parcel** with architecture that matches the neighboring professional buildings in height, scale, and feel. This preserves the "Open Sky" effect and prevents the playground from becoming a stagnant "pollution pocket."
- **The Impact:** Medical Circle is characterized by human-scale professional buildings. A 5-story monolith is an architectural outlier that violates **MGO 28.071** regarding scale transitions. Flattening the natural hill to unify these parcels destroys a vital sound and visual buffer. Furthermore, a connecting road invites "short-cut" traffic onto the narrow Medical Circle, endangering student drop-off/pick-up.

3. Mandatory Step-backs & Footprint Matching

- **The Demand (Step-backs):** Require a mandatory building **step-back of at least 15 feet at the 3rd story** for all facades facing the school. This preserves the **Sky Exposure Plane** and prevents a sheer vertical wall from looming over the children.
- **The Demand (Footprint):** The building at **5555 Odana Rd** (the north parcel) must maintain the **same footprint as the existing apartment building at 5577 Odana Rd** to allow for a reasonable buffer.

4. Threat to School Viability & Mitigation Fund

Madison's Comprehensive Plan prioritizes "Access to Quality Childcare." MCH serves children year-round (ages 2–11). A 24-month construction window represents the **entire educational experience** of a preschooler.

- **The Demand:** If approved, the developer must provide a **Relocation & Improvement Fund**. This would cover the costs of a temporary move during heavy construction or the installation of high-performance privacy/acoustic windows for the school.

5. CPTED, Housing Typology, Traffic, and Landscape Bonds

- **Privacy (MGO 28.172):** Under Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles, a "wall of balconies" looming over a toddler playground creates a "goldfish bowl" effect. Remove all balconies on the north and west elevations facing the playground to prevent unilateral surveillance of toddlers.
- **Family Units:** 5534 Medical Circle should prioritize **2- and 3-bedroom units**. High-turnover 1-bedroom rentals do not support the long-term stability or the "Missing Middle" housing needs of this specific school-adjacent neighborhood.
- **Construction Parking Management Plan:** A formal plan that **prohibits all contractor parking on Medical Circle** and mandates a traffic safety officer during MCH peak hours (8:00–9:00 AM and 3:00–4:30 PM).
- **Landscape Bond:** A **5-year Survival Bond** for all proposed mature trees to ensure they do not die from transplant shock or lack of sun.

Summary of Demands (The Commissioner "Cheat Sheet")

1. **Mandatory Studies:** Require Hourly Shadow, Acoustic (Target <55 dB), and CFD Airflow models.
2. **Decouple the Parcels:** Keep 5534 Medical Circle separate; match neighbor height and architectural feel.
3. **Massing Modifications:** Mandate a 3rd-story step-back and match the 5555 Odana footprint to 5577 Odana.
4. **Operational Safety:** A formal Construction Parking Plan banning all contractor vehicles from Medical Circle.
5. **Mitigation Fund:** Developer-funded bond for school relocation or permanent environmental improvements.


The physical soul of MCH will be lost if this proceeds as proposed. I ask the Commission to protect our childcare infrastructure and the cognitive health of Madison's children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Diana Weng

Parent, Board, & Community Member





5534 Medical Circle

From: [Margaret Porco](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Development Proposal Odana Rd/Medical Circle 91512
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 11:02:32 AM

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My name is Carmen Porco. I have more than 50 years of experience managing affordable housing communities in Madison and Milwaukee, serving residents at 30% of area median income and below. I am not here to oppose affordable housing. I am here because this development, as proposed, does not meet our community's most urgent housing needs — and because it threatens something else this community cannot afford to lose. The Montessori Children's House, a beloved local institution, faces real risks from this project: displacement, reduced enrollment, and the erosion of its role as a community anchor. These concerns deserve your full attention alongside the housing questions. You have both the responsibility and the tools to ask for more.

I have spent my career believing in the power of well-designed, well-placed affordable housing to lift individuals and families and strengthen neighborhoods. I am obviously not here to oppose affordable housing but this development, as it stands is not going to meet the deep affordable housing need that exists. The data is clear: Madison has been overbuilding at the 50–80% AMI tier while dramatically underbuilding at 30% AMI and below — the threshold where severe cost burden, housing instability, and overcrowding are actually concentrated. The CDA's own planning documents confirm that overcrowding in the rental market is most acute among households below 30% AMI, and that family-sized units are in critically short supply. When Rise Madison opened in 2025, it made news precisely because it included three-bedroom townhomes — a unit type so rare in new affordable construction that its existence was noteworthy. That tells you something important about where the gap is. This development does not fill that gap.

Affordability on paper does not equate to affordability in practice. I understand the management company *may* choose to lease to residents below 60% AMI. I also know this industry. When a developer won't commit to building units at 30% AMI because it reduces profit, it is entirely reasonable to question whether their tenant selection practices will quietly screen out the lowest-income applicants — through credit requirements, for example. This happens. Frequently. You should not accept a promise of deeper affordability that has no structural guarantee behind it.

You are not obligated to approve whatever affordability is offered simply because some affordability is better than none. That standard sets a low bar that serves developers more than it serves residents. You have aging affordable developments across this city that are candidates for redevelopment — projects that could add units and serve genuine need, led by local organizations with deep roots here. I would ask you to weigh that potential seriously against the value of unconditionally approving another out-of-town developer who has not demonstrated the kind of care and community investment this process deserves.

This decision carries real consequences beyond housing.

This project also poses significant impacts on a 60-year-old community nonprofit. I ask you to

take that seriously. When a commission with the power to set conditions chooses not to use it — when it accepts a proposal as-is despite documented unmet needs and community concerns — it sends a message. It tells residents that large developers take precedence over the people and institutions that have built this city. In the current climate, that message lands hard.

This project could be modified to serve the needs of the concerns you are faced with. The building could be set back further, units could be redesigned to serve deeper need. A large, well-resourced developer has the capacity to do that. The question is whether you will ask them to.

I believe Madison can do better. I believe you can ask for better. And I believe the community is watching to see whether you will. I imagine for many, an unconditional vote of approval in this case may impact the desire of residents and local partners alike to work with a City that does not demonstrate the values it claims to hold for its people and long-term community institutions. I know it gives me pause.

I ask you to consider the requests that have been made in the community in balance with this project. Your job as community service members on a public commission, is to ensure that we are promoting development that serves the needs of our community. **In reality, this development as proposed is not meeting the needs of those most vulnerable in our communities. This is true for both low and (extremely low) income populations, children and small business.**

Thank you,

Rev. Dr. Carmen Porco
Porco Consulting
Housing Ministries of WI
CPDS